

2019-03-17 ... 10am Sermon ... Revd Canon Judy Hunt

Luke 13: 31 – 35

'A Tearful God'

Introduction ...

When you encounter a tragic situation, a situation in which people are struggling – that might be amongst Friends or Family – or via the news ... people suffering ... how do you understand, think, wonder how God is reacting? What about the shooting in Christ Church New Zealand ...

Do you think God is somehow 'satisfied' because he caused the suffering?

Do you think God is angry because of the suffering?

These are important questions because they go to the heart of our Faith ... a Faith that claims to be **'good news'** for a world in which we can be bombarded with bad news.

Going back to the 'Faith questions' that members of this congregation said that they wanted to explore this year – there were:

**How can we believe in a loving God
when there is such cruelty in the world-
especially in war torn countries?**

And ... **Why does God inflict such suffering on good people?**

The second question assumes that God causes suffering ... and I think that assumption must be challenged ... yes God has given us Freewill (which is important in looking at both questions) ... and we can misuse that Freewill in destructive ways ...

But look at today's Gospel reading ... we do not see there a God who is inflicting suffering ... but rather a God who is so moved by the suffering, that he is sending his Son – who himself is lamenting over Jerusalem. Both God the Father and God the Son are lamenting ... and expressing frustration that human beings are not turning to God for help and guidance.

So listen to this meditation – which brings in understanding from Jeremiah and Isaiah as well as today's Gospel: **(From 'Stages on the Way' Wild Goose Worship Group p. 50 – 51)**

Narrator: *Listen,
for this is the Lord speaking.
For the people who are suffering.*

God: *I am crushed because my people are crushed.
I mourn.
I am completely dismayed.
Is there no medicine in the land?
Are there no doctors there?
Why, then, have my people not been healed?*

PTO

*I wish my head were a well of water
and my eyes a fountain of tears
so that I could cry day and night
for the suffering of my people. (Silence)*

Narrator: *Listen,
for this is the Lord speaking.
There are tears on God's cheeks
for the people who are hungry.*

God: *I weep for the vineyards
and I weep for the country.
My tears fall for the towns
where there is no harvest to make the people glad.
No one is happy now in the fertile fields;
no one shouts or sings in the vineyards,
no one tramps grapes to make wine;
the shouts of joy are ended,
my people hunger. (Silence)*

Narrator: *Listen,
for this is the Lord speaking.
There are tears on Jesus' cheeks
for the people who miss the opportunities for peace.*

God: *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you murder the prophets
and slaughter those God sends you.
If only you knew today the way that leads to peace,
but you cannot see it.
Therefore other people will destroy you
and not a stone will be left in its place.
This will happen because you did not recognize
the time when God came to save you. (Silence)*

(next page)

Narrator: *Listen,
for this is the Lord speaking.
There are tears on God's cheek:
tears for the callous
tears for the uncared-for:*

God: *The wounds of the daughter of my people
wounds me too.*

Conclusion ...

Our God does not inflict suffering. God the Son shared our suffering in his betrayal, arrest, torture and death. But he also transforms suffering with his presence ... and – for those who are willing to respond – he empowers us to follow a different way ... in which love and not hatred, reconciliation and not revenge triumph.

That different way is so much needed.